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Purpose Of This Issue

1. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM should be known as favoring Individualism, a social philosophy which has for 75 years been misrepresented and attacked by intellectuals in the Christian Reformed church. Not to be outdone in courtesy, we wish to be known to be correspondingly hostile to Interventionism, which is the prevailing doctrine of the intellectuals. We again define, in this issue, the terms Individualism, Collectivism and Interventionism.

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2. There is a great outcry by Christians generally against *selfishness.* Selfishness is a most equivocal term — a term with a very dangerous double meaning. We are, of course, against genuine selfishness when that refers to a definite evil, but we are not against selfishness when that term is defined as it is now apparently being defined by intellectuals in the Christian Reformed church. When selfishness means what they apparently mean, then we consider selfishness no evil but a natural and proper human characteristic, fully approved by Scripture. We shall show how the idea of the "sin of selfishness" is a dangerous idea which is derived from, or at least is consistent with, Anders Nygren's false doctrine of *agape,* that is, of love. The modern outcry in the various Christian churches — against selfishness — something practically unknown 25 years ago — is getting louder. We regret the clamor. We are here subjecting to critical examination the Nygrenian idea of the "sin" of self-love, or of selfishness. fn

Request For Information

We wish to find what we have never been able to find, namely, a logical argument by an intellectual of the Christian Reformed church against Karl Marx's argument condemning "surplus value" or "unearned income." Marx hangs his whole case for his Dialectical Materialism and Socialism-Communism on his condemnation of all "unearned income." He said that all "unearned income" (surplus value) is unjust and *exploitation.* Marx considered the Law of God (proclaimed through Moses) wicked, because it unqualifiedly authorized what Marx considered to be criminal *exploitation* of one man by another.

Marx can be answered by quoting Biblical texts. But he should *also* be shown to be wrong by *logic.* We do not have such wide acquaintance with the writings of Christian Reformed intellectuals to know with certainty that any one of them has written a rebuttal to Marx, that is, that such an intellectual clearly saw where Marx's fallacy lay and was interested enough to refute it.

It is worth $100 to us to be saved the labor of searching for evidence of such a logical argument. We shall be glad to send anyone a check for $100 who will supply us with the name of the author and publication in which the ideas of Karl Marx on *surplus*

value were logically refuted by a member of the Christian Reformed church. We need a *conclusive* logical argument against Marx's idea of "surplus value" and "exploitation" (*ausbeutung* in German and *uitbuiting* in Dutch). If that kind of argument does not exist or cannot be developed by Christians in the Christian Reformed church or generally, then the ethics of Christianity are in a bad way; they are not being defended from a *rational* viewpoint. We would sincerely lament that. fn

The Benefits Of Discussion

Disagreements between people are aggravated when they go off into a corner by themselves and avoid discussion with others. Sensible men come closer together as a result of discussion. Each may learn that he should moderate his ideas some, or that his ideas are not accepted because there is a road block in the thinking of the other man. By discussion each man learns of the road blocks. By discussion each man discovers his own errors.

In a sense, behind most *continued* disputes there is the error of the man who is right. It is his fault that the other has not discovered the right idea. The man who is right should set out to discover what makes others think differently. Having discovered that, he can then revise his presentation. If his presentation had taken that hindrance into account from the beginning, there would have been an earlier "meeting of minds."

We are prepared under reasonable circumstances to defend, and if necessary revise, all ideas presented in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. We are prepared to participate in discussions or debates. This is not a field in which we have been active, but is something we are prepared to attempt.

We once worked for a superior who made an unusual approach to questions in dispute. He was in a position where every disputed question in the business eventually came to him. He was always in the thick of trouble. He followed Alexander Hamilton's principle of informing himself better on the questions at issue than any other man. Off he would go to a meeting with his arms bulging with papers, analyses and reports.

Often he would come back and casually say: "We won, everything is settled [so and so]."

But sometimes he would come back and say, "We lost; *what did we do wrong?*" Those last five words eventually became a refrain in our ears. He never blamed the others for stupidity or perverseness, or prejudice, or dishonesty. If he had not convinced them, he did not blame them but himself. Always there was that last sentence: "What did *we* do wrong?"

There was an invariable consequence to that interpretation which excused others and blamed ourselves. We always had to begin anew on the study of the problem. The old way had failed. Obviously, the content of the old study was wrong, or the method of presentation was wrong. Otherwise, the others would have been convinced. But they had not been. If we had done such a poor job, there was nothing to do but to do it differently and *better*.

Eventually, there would be another meeting — in a week, a month, a year, or in years. Off he would go with his papers. Again he would come back with "We won" or "We lost." But if it was "We lost" it was inevitable that we would have to go back again to the gruelling labor of a new and better presentation of facts and arguments.

Naturally, eventually everything went down before that man as tenpins go down from a perfect throw by a crack bowler. The reason is that the man blamed himself, not others. It is easier to reform and improve oneself than others. It is wiser to begin with *self*-improvement than with *fellow*-improvement.

We were influenced enough by this man so that we are prepared to expose ourselves to any contradiction of what is published in Progressive Calvinism. If we lose, we shall be glad to learn. Or if we lose because we failed to make our ideas clear and acceptable, we shall return to ourselves and say, "We lost; what did *we* do wrong?"

He who never gives up, always wins.

Maybe that is too big a generalization. A contrary experience should be mentioned.

In a business in trouble partly because of changed and uncontrollable circumstances, it was decided to have weekly board meetings. But these contributed to friction and not to a solution. Discussions, in this case, caused trouble, not peace. The explanation was that the two top men in the business were irreconcilably different — one was a wise man and the other was not. Discussions revealed that the latter did not belong in the business. Such an arrangement was skillfully made. Then the prosperity of the business was restored. In other words, discussions do not help when you are dealing with some people. But among wise men, discussion promotes unity. fn

IV. MESSIANIC INTERVENTIONISM
(continued)

Definitions Of Social Philosophies

Systems of ideas can be classified from various viewpoints and in various ways. The classifications are valid depending on the purpose in mind.

Political philosophies are classifiable as democratic, aristocratic or monarchic, and in other ways. *Christian religions* are classifiable as Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian, or otherwise. *Economic systems* are classifiable as capitalist or socialist-communist; as free market economic systems or as controlled (*dirigist*) economic systems; or otherwise.

A classification is also needed for *social philosophies.* The classification which appears to us as helpful at the present time as any is threefold: Individualism, Collectivism and Interventionism. We briefly define these three social philosophies.

I

Individualism is a system of ideas which believes in complete freedom for individuals, except that they are forbidden to violate that part of the Law of Moses which prohibits wrongdoing to the neighbor — coercion, adultery, theft, falsehood, covetousness.

The ethical system that parallels this is: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

The political corollary is that the less government, the better. Individualism proposes a *voluntary* society. What government there is, is a government of *laws* and not a government of *men.*

II

Collectivism is a system of ideas which believes in the complete priority of society over the individual. Whatever those in authority wish (usually camouflaged as being for the public welfare) is declared to be the highest morality.

The ethical system that parallels this is that every man must love his neighbor more than himself and esteem him better than himself. The approved formula for this is: From each according to his ability to each according to his need.

The political corollary is that the more government, the better; the government is authorized not merely to restrain men from being bad (as in Individualism) but even to coerce them to be good. The government having such a broad purpose must be a government of men acting according to unpredictable discretion and not a government of known laws.

III

Interventionism is a system of ideas which believes that freedom is a good thing, but is not something with which an individual may be fully trusted, and that consequently the government should intervene, that is reduce liberty in innumerable ways and more and more as society grows progressively complex, for the alleged purpose of the welfare of society.

The ethical system that parallels this is a dualism — an individual may not violate the Second Table of the Law of Moses, but society (a *group* of individuals) may; what is immoral for *one* is moral for *more than one.*

The political corollary is that "the powers that be are of God" and must be obeyed. A ruler is "annointed." Whatever he decides is good for society, is therefore really good; but should it not be, it must nevertheless be obeyed. This principle violates the *general* rule of Scripture that it is required of men to obey God rather than men. Interventionism vacillates between Individualism and Collectivism. It is not a coherent system as either Individual-

ism or Collectivism. Nor is it a candid, upright system; it argues from the premises of Individualism against Collectivism; and it argues from the premises of Collectivism against Individualism. Interventionism, as is true of Collectivism, is a government by men acting with discretion and not a government by stable laws; the degree of the government by men rather than by laws is less than in the case of Collectivism but the principle is there.

IV

It may be helpful to group the terms in the several fields of thought so that the related systems will be understood to be related.

VARIOUS PHILOSOPHIES

(1)	(2)	(3)
	Social Philosophies	
Individualism	Collectivism	Interventionism
	Economic Philosophies	
Capitalism	Socialism and Communism	Interventionism
	Political Philosophies	
Limited or Constitutional government	Totalitarian systems; Communism Socialism Peoples' democracies Fascism Naziism	Bureaucracy New Dealism Modern Republicanism *Dirigisme* Syndicalism
	Jurisprudential Philosophies	
Rule of Law or *Rechtsstaat*	Rule of Men	Mixture of Rule of Men and Rule of Law
	Ethical Philosophies	
Scriptural	Nonscriptural	Nonscriptural

In PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we hold to the philosophies in the first column, namely, Individualism, Capitalism, Limited Government, Rule of Law and Scriptural principles. In contrast, the prevailing doctrine of many members of Christian churches is Interventionist, *Dirigist,* Bureaucratic, Rule of Men and non-scriptural. In some cases, Christians even favor the systems outlined in the second column.

We consider the ideas represented by the terms in columns (2) and (3) to be evil philosophies. fn

Prevalence Of Interventionism Among Some Modern Calvinists

Abraham Kuyper and his numerous American followers condemn and detest *Individualism.* This exposes PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM to criticism and contempt, because its publishers are avowed Individualists and are unqualifiedly in favor of Individualism.

Kuyper was opposed to the Individualism of the French Revolution; and so is PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. *That* Individualism was a false Individualism, which there and everywhere has led to Collectivism. (See F. A. Hayek's "Individualism: True and False," the first essay in *Individualism and Economic Order,* University of Chicago Press, 1946. See also PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, Vol. I, June 1955, pp. 152 ff.) Kuyper made a serious blunder when he considered all Individualism to be in principle the same as the false Individualism of the French Revolution.

The opposite of Individualism is Collectivism. Those are the two basic philosophies for the structure of society. However, although Kuyper and his followers are not willing to be known as Individualists, they are still less willing to be known as Collectivists. Collectivism has a bad reputation — Socialism and Communism being in social, political and economic life nothing more nor less than a manifestation of Collectivist principles.

What do Kuyper and his followers do then, not being willing to be known as either Individualists or Collectivists?

They take no truly descriptive name for their social, political or economic philosophy. They fly no social philosophy flag. They shift ground and call themselves Calvinists, a religious term which is not helpful when describing social philosophies.

The proper term by which to describe their social philosophy is Interventionism. Interventionism puts forward very pretentious claims, namely, the claim that it has the good character and the merit of Individualism without its alleged faults, and also the claim that it has the good character and the merit of Collectivism without its obvious deficiencies. This would be wonderful if it were or could be true. It is not true and it cannot be true.

The idea of choosing part of one system and part of another system is known as eclecticism (ek lek' ti sizm). From time immemorial there have been eclectics who have thought that they had "principles" when they took something from one coherent system of thought and combined it with something from a contradictory system of thought equally coherent. Actually to be an eclectic is to be without principle (*beginselloos* in Dutch). This will of course be defined by all Interventionists.

You cannot put fire and water together. Either the fire evaporates the water, or the water quenches the fire. Similarly, it must work out that Interventionism destroys its Individualist elements (and thereby becomes Collectivist), or that Interventionism destroys its Collectivist elements (and thereby becomes Individualist).

A book recently published in the United States, entitled *All Ye That Labor,* written by Lester De Koster, Librarian at Calvin College (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1956) is in the Kuyper tradition and in the tradition of the Anti-Revolutionary Party of the Netherlands. This book teaches a modern American brand of Interventionism similar to what was once taught by Kuyper and is presently accepted in aggravated form by the Anti-Revolutionary Party of the Netherlands. Descartes (as we outlined in the May 1957 issue) outlined four simple rules for thinking, working, learning and developing a coherent system of thought. Interventionism violates Descartes's rules. It is a system for people who do not think to ultimate consequences or who need some irrationality in their thinking in order to remain consistent with some misapprehended article of their "Faith."

An *American,* unless he has accepted Interventionism (probably imported from Europe in the latest twenty-five years), will traditionally be an Individualist, not an Interventionist. But some American Calvinists have been peculiarly exposed to the doctrines of Interventionism.

It is bad to be an Interventionist for political reasons; it is worse to be an Interventionist for religious reasons. The widely held idea that Interventionism is "revealed" in Scripture should be re-examined. fn

Individualism And Selfishness

I

One way to condemn Individualism is to declare that it stands for selfishness, and consequently that it is unneighborly and unjust. Individualism, for some misinformed people, is supposed to be the philosophy: Look out for yourself and let the devil take the hindmost. We address ourselves to the question: is Individualism sinful selfishness and a social philosophy which despises the requirement to "love" the neighbor?

In his essay, "The Task of the Church for the Solution of Modern Problems," Chapter II in *God Centered Living* by the Calvinistic Action Committee (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1951) Rev. Peter Van Tuinen refers to what he considers the great social sins of the age when he writes (page 40, our italics):

> We take for granted that the church will preach the gospel demands of justice, charity, honesty and stewardship, while at the same time [it] condemns such un-Christian economic practices as economic oppression, *selfishness,* usury, and mammonism.

According to this "the gospel condemns . . . [the] economic practice [of] . . . selfishness . . . "

In Van Tuinen's formulation "selfishness" is an *economic* practice. This is an improper limitation, but it is merely one of several evidences of an anti-business bias on the part of Van Tuinen.

Such "selfishness" is, according to Van Tuinen, a gross sin against which the church should "preach." Obviously he is contrasting good and evil; here are his opposites, individually or collectively (his *exact* proposition is not clear):

Good	?	Evil
1. justice	— versus —	1. economic oppression
2. charity	— versus —	2. selfishness
3. honesty	— versus —	3. usury
4. stewardship	— versus —	4. mammonism

It somewhat appears that Van Tuinen here contrasts *selfishness* with *charity*. On that basis, failure to engage in charity would be selfishness.

No right-minded person, Christian or non-Christian, can be indifferent or hostile to charity. The logic in favor of charity is conclusive. It is this: fortune, natural calamities, the unpredictable and the unknowable play a part in every person's life. For example, a cyclone snuffs out a life or destroys a man's property. Should the victim or his widow or his orphans be left to perish or suffer handicapping hardships while the neighbors go their own way in comfort and indifference? Such action by neighbors is condemned not only by religion; it is also condemned by men who have no religion. There is a fairly common sentiment of "sympathy" which makes people disposed to help those who are genuinely unfortunate. Even bad men, except at their worst, are not devoid of charity in that sense.

We have never heard any man declare that charity was not a good thing. Every man realizes that under unfavorable circumstances he, too, may at some time need a lift. He gives another a lift today, because tomorrow he may need a lift himself. A society without charity — without the lifts to help others meet genuinely adverse circumstances — cannot really be a good society. Charity, properly understood, is not only an admirable Christian virtue, it is hard secular common sense.

If *selfishness* means the unwillingness to participate in *charity*, then selfishness (according to logic) is folly, and (according to the law requiring neighborly love) is sin.

We have cited a case where charity is in response to a situation resulting from a "natural calamity." Suppose instead that a man's distress and his family's distress is because he is lazy; he refuses to work or at least to work well enough to justify anybody employing him. Is it then *economic selfishness* to refuse to employ an unsatisfactory worker? Is that a failure to show *charity*?

In this connection it should steadily be kept in mind that Van Tuinen is writing about "economic practices" which undoubtedly means *business* practices. He appears, in other words, to be talking about *business* attitudes toward charity. If that business attitude does not show "unselfishness," then it must be manifesting "selfishness," and the "gospel demands" are alleged to be that business must not show such selfishness.

Now, obviously, it is a form of "selfishness" for a farmer to discharge a lazy and unprofitable farmhand; or for a housewife to pay off a shiftless and unheedful maid and tell her that the employment is ended; or for a dentist to send home a technician who damages inlays; or for a retailer to lay off a clerk who causes customers to stay away.

Business, in a competitive economy (which means that the customers are *free* to patronize one business or another) must be *efficient*. If not, then the business goes "out of business"; it fails; it fails just because customers no longer buy from that business. This principle of efficiency as determining the continuance of a business, it seems, conclusively excludes charity from business.

A little thought will make the reason obvious. The proposal to keep *A* on the payroll who is damaging the business can have one of two effects:

(1) the employer can "pay for" or suffer the loss which the employee causes, that is, *he* engages in the "charity" shown to that unsatisfactory employee; or

(2) the employer can by charging higher prices endeavor to pass on to his customers that "charity" which consists in keeping this unprofitable employee on the payroll.

However, the employer cannot continue indefinitely on (1), and the customers are unappreciative of being made the victim of (2). To continue to engage in (1), except in isolated cases, is not possible. Charity is ordinarily related to tithing, that is, giving 10% of your income. The profits actually available for distribution out of *all* businesses over a period of *many* years hardly exceeds 3%. Anybody in business engaging in charity by tithing in the form of 10% inefficiency will soon go broke — as soon as his capital is exhausted.

The other alternative, that a business man add to his prices an amount to cover the inefficiency of a lazy or incompetent employee, thereby passing on the burden of his "business charity" to his customers, will not work either. Customers refuse to pay extra prices to *A* so that *A* may keep *B* who is lazy, whereas those extra prices would not have to be paid if *A* employed *C* who is industrious.

It can in fact be sensibly declared that it is *sin* to tolerate inefficiency. There is a universal welfareshortage — the means to supply all the needs of people do not equal all the needs themselves. There is a *scarcity* of the means of production. That scarcity consists in labor and materials. It can be affirmed that no man has a moral right to stay in business who does not muster labor and materials *efficiently* — that is, at as low cost as anybody else can muster labor and material. High cost producers have no business being in business. They ought to quit on their own decision, or it is something to be thankful for that customers (by not buying) force them out of business. The idea of being efficient is in this situation an idea exactly contrary to charity. Charity should be a part of business only when "natural calamities" exist. Those, by the way, are practically always allowed for in business, which usually does so by paying premiums for insurance to carry such risks.

The conclusion can therefore be reached that Van Tuinen cannot soundly contrast "economic [business] selfishness" with charity. If he does, it is the excitation of hostility toward business on the basis of an indirect appeal to covetousness and envy.

There is, therefore, no merit in Van Tuinen's attack against "economic selfishness" if he means thereby a failure in business

to show "charity" in the customary Biblical sense. Van Tuinen, if that is his proposition, has merely confused himself that business is not necessarily determined by a principle of efficiency (serving customers well), but can and should tolerate inefficiency under the pious label of charity.

Van Tuinen's oblique attack on business by decrying "economic selfishness" appears wholly unwarranted.

II

The question may then well be asked: is *selfishness* sin? The answer of course depends on what is meant by selfishness. (We have already shown that the meaning given to selfishness, when it is defined as *failure to show charity in business matters,* leads to absurdities.)

The word *selfishness* needs a sensible definition.

The word *selfishness* can mean no more than bad manners or lack of thoughtfulness. In a family there are various activities which any member can perform. Some members, without being asked, do their share of such work. Others do not do so, except they are asked or are even disciplined into doing so. Sin? Maybe, but who is to decide *exactly* what each person is to do! Bad manners? Undoubtedly, but such conduct does not increase people's affection for you. Eventually, they will "get your number." You will be known as a "selfish" person and be treated accordingly. A doting mother or father, a weak brother or sister, a not-too-smart friend will let you take advantage of them. They have nobody to blame but themselves; the "benefits" of "selfishness" in the foregoing sense are voluntarily given by some people. The selfish person did not coerce them to pander to his selfishness. On balance, we consider such selfishness not to be sin, but bad manners and unsound social relations. When theologians and sociologists use the word *selfishness* they are not, we are sure, talking about such bad manners. They refer to something worse. Let us move on from bad manners to sins.

III

Selfishness in the area of *sin* can mean dishonesty. It could be that this is what Van Tuinen had in mind although his "honesty" in the favorable column is not exactly opposite "selfishness"

in the unfavorable column. Such dishonesty undoubtedly would refer to theft, and therefore be a violation of the eighth commandment, Thou shalt not steal.

It is unwise to substitute the term, selfishness, for the term, theft. The act of being dishonest regarding property and rights should be described by the old and accepted term, *theft*. However, one vaguely realizes that it is not the positive act of theft which is referred to by the term, selfishness. Not even those whose thinking is confused because they fail to define terms use the term *selfishness* as a substitute for the term *theft*.

Of course, if *selfishness* meant *theft* it would be an obvious case of *sin*.

IV

Selfishness as the term really is being used by Van Tuinen, apparently falls somewhere between (1) the idea of bad manners and (2) the idea of theft, a violation of the Eighth Commandment, Thou shalt not steal. But there is an important point to note. Although his idea of selfishness is obviously worse than bad manners and is probably not exactly theft, it nevertheless is a grave and heinous SIN. What is this selfishness, existing somewhere between manners and theft, but still SIN?

Selfishness becomes an imaginary horrible sin as a result of a peculiar manner of defining *love*. *Love* is in this situation not defined in terms of the Commandments plus forbearance, charity and the gospel, but rather as a substituting of the wishes of another for your own. In other words, if you follow your own wishes and judgment, rather than bending to the wishes and judgments of others, individually and/or collectively, *you are selfish and a sinner*. Your neighbors' wishes or choices must be considered ahead of your own; then you are not "selfish"; then you are not a sinner.

The April 28, 1957, church bulletins in the Christian Reformed church, printed in connection with the Centennial under the title "Christian Compassion," contain the statement: "A Christian counts the other better than self," a statement obviously taken from the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians (Philip-

pians 2:3). That statement has a valid meaning in the specific context, that is, in the limited situation referred to by Paul. But the idea that the proposition, "The Christian counts the other better than self," is a *general truth* of universal application, makes Christianity nonsensical and unfortunately hypocritical, because no Christian can possibly consistently act on the basis that the statement is true. If he did so, his actions would be suicidal for his own character and personality. The "unselfishness" implied by the general statement is so far beyond reason and conduct that it must sound hypocritical to non-Christians.

The question to be asked is this: Should the specific and narrow statement taken from Paul's Epistle to the Philippians be taken as the general rule, or should the *prevailing* teaching of Scripture on love, namely, the Mosaic Law, be taken as the rule for neighborly love. To this question the latter must be the correct answer.

The Mosaic Law begins with *self-love. That* is the standard. Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself.* It must, therefore, be a sure error to say that self-love is sin, for selfishness is self-love, and if self-love is assumed in Scripture to be a good thing, then selfishness cannot possibly be sin.

In this regard it is interesting to quote Soren Kierkegaard, to whom many modern Christian leaders turn for inspiration. In his *Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton University Press, 1942) page 30, he wrote (our italics):

> This is what happens in connection with the paradox of love. Man lives undisturbed a self-centered life, until there awakens in him the paradox of self-love, in the form of love for another, the object of his longing. (Self-love is the underlying principle, or the principle that is made to lie under, in all love; whence if we conceive a religion of love, *this religion need make but one assumption,* as epigrammatic as true, and take its realization for granted: *namely the condition that man loves himself,* in order to command him to love his neighbor as himself.)

This is what Kierkegaard says: ". . . if we conceive of a religion of love, this religion need make but one assumption, . . . namely, the condition that man loves himself, . . ."

Although we are certainly no followers of Kierkegaard in general, he is undoubtedly right when he indicates that it is nonsensical to say that a man should love his neighbor as himself, if he is sinful when he loves himself. The "condition that man loves himself" is the prerequisite to loving the neighbor.

V

There are three separate stages or aspects of the *selfishness* problem which should be definitely distinguished. We shall call those stages: (1) sinlessness; (2) sin; (3) super-sin. The decline from sinlessness to super-sin is a follows:

1. *Sinlessness.* Loving self, *without wronging the neighbor,* that is, without coercing him, robbing him of wife and goods, deceiving him, or coveting what he has; plus showing him forbearance; plus charity; plus proclaiming the gospel to him.

2. *Sin.* Loving self, *at the expense of the neighbor,* that is, by coercing him, robbing him of wife and goods, deceiving him, and coveting what he has; without showing him forbearance; without manifesting charity; without proclaiming the gospel to him.

3. *Super-sin.* Not loving self, but "loving" the neighbor by divining *his* inclinations, appraising his needs and presumably sacrificing for him. This appears to be a super-good deed. This indeed is what is meant by "unselfishness." This is more than God requires of men, unless He wishes men fully to equal and outdo Him.

The definition that idealistic Christians have in mind when they talk of the great merit of *unselfishness* is really that a man should no longer be a humble, mortal man with his own needs which need to be supplied — legitimately, of course — by loving himself, that is, working for *self;* but a man should be as God knowing the needs of all men better than they know it themselves, and supplying those needs. Man is to be omniscient and omnipotent relative to all his neighbors or else he is a sinner, not having been unselfish enough!

VI

Self-love should not be interpreted to mean the same thing as doing things always and only for yourself. No human being does everything for himself *only*. He always has some motivations to do things for others.

A man is motivated by his own "values." He may believe that the greatest "value" in the world is proclaiming the gospel. He will then be motivated to act accordingly. He has in this instance pursued his own particular "values." He has in that sense, exercised his self-love; he has "been himself"; he has been free to exercise liberty in pursuing his own values, although those values were not specifically for himself.

Another man may have an entirely different set of "values." He may believe that the greatest "value" in the world is in discovering the cause of a disease. He will be motivated to act accordingly. He has in this instance pursued his own particular "values." He, too, has exercised his self-love; he has "been himself"; he has been free to exercise liberty in pursuing his own values, although those values were not specifically for himself.

Another man may have another set of "values." He may be annoyed by the hard labor of harvesting and threshing wheat by hand. He is determined to get it done in an easier way. He tries to invent a harvester and thresher, and does. He was motivated by his own particular "values." He has in that sense, exercised his self-love, he has "been himself," he has done what he wanted to do, not what somebody else wanted him to do. In pursuing his own values he has exercised his self-love.

Self-love, then, is not for *self* only, but for *personal or subjective values,* that is, the individual values which each man has and which he wishes to pursue at liberty and *which may be as much for others as for himself*. But they are *his* values. Self-love cannot be exercised except a man have liberty. Liberty is a prerequisite to the activity of self-love, that is, the pursuit of personal values.

This opportunity to manifest self-love (which self-love creates all the variety and richness to the world) is obviously frustrated if all neighbors, by being "unselfish" are to be meddling in everybody else's affairs. This "love" from neighbors, this "unselfish-

ness" on their part, this noblest(?) manifestation of Christianity consists in a man determining the "values" for his wife, for his children immature and mature, for his brothers and sisters, for his neighbors, for his friends, for his enemies, for men far away. This "love," this "unselfishness" may genuinely interfere with all the subjective "values" of these other people, but this "love" and "unselfishness" is to be so perfect that everybody is to be happy to surrender his individual values for that wonderful Christian "love" and "unselfishness."

Simply stated, it is notorious arrogance to press such "love" and "unselfishness" on other people; nobody has so God-like a mind that he can do that for all other men.

VII

Men not being so omniscient, they simplify their application of their alleged "love" and "unselfishness" by making *mass* decisions. They thereby become collectivists. That is what men are in Russia. The Russians are "unselfish" and "love" the neighbor so greatly that they wish to set subjective "values" for *everybody*. They want no Individualism there. They turn to Collectivism, group action, the coercion of the acceptance by all of a mass decision. Under the banner of "love" and "unselfishness," the Sixth Commandment, Thou shalt not kill [or coerce], is violated.

Interventionism is no better. By the agency of a bureaucrat a mass "value" is coerced on each citizen.

There is only one social philosophy which can possibly conform to the teaching of Scripture, namely, the social philosophy known as Individualism. It is a humble philosophy. It lets each man have his own subjective values, *but he may not pursue them at the expense of his neighbors.* Individualism sets the same demands on men that Christian ethics apply.

VIII

In this examination of the relationship of Individualism to selfishness we have shown:

1. That "unselfishness" cannot be defined for business as the application of the principle of charity in the place of the principle of efficiency. The principle of charity has a very limited appli-

cation to business. The principle of efficiency has a very extensive application to business.

2. Forms of "selfishness" which constitute bad manners and poor public relations are not "sin."

3. The term "selfishness" should not be a modern substitute for the terrible sins in the Second Table of the Law. Those sins should be called by their old specific names (violence, adultery, etc.) and not by a new, vague, general name, as "selfishness."

4. The term "selfishness" really means something entirely different from sins condemned by Moses. It means acting according to your personal subjective values rather than sacrificing yourself to the subjective values of others. This pursuit of your own subjective values is erroneously considered by some Christian intellectuals to be a great sin. However, it is not a great sin, because that idea of selfishness involves a denial of (a) the legitimacy of self-love which is approved and, by implication, commanded by Scripture; (b) it assumes a super-human knowledge on the part of every man in regard to his neighbors' "values" or motivations. Only God has the capacity for such knowledge, and He elected to create a world in which man would be free to pursue his own subjective values. What justifies mortal men to undertake what God obviously elected not to undertake?

5. In the process of undertaking (under the banner of "neighborly love" and with the arrogant claim of "unselfishness") the imposition of the subjective values of some men over those of their neighbors, the direct commandment of God is violated. It is not possible to know what *each* man's "values" are, and so "*mass* values" are coercively imposed contrary to the Sixth Commandment.

IX

In summary, *Collectivism* under the flag of brotherly love is always violent and oppressive; and *Individualism* under the banner of humility is always meek and lowly.

Interventionism is in principle a stage on the road to Collectivism. The principle underlying it is Collectivist; Interventionism when full-grown is always Collectivism. fn

Nygren's Two Loves And The Idea Of Selfishness

I

Nygren in his book, *Agape and Eros* (translated by Philip S. Watson, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1953) insists that there are two "loves" and *only* two. He writes, page 100, his italics:

> . . . *the two commandments* [to love God and to love the neighbor] *are two only, and no third can be added to them.* Alongside of the attempt to absorb neighborly love into love for God, there appears throughout Christian history an attempt to find in the commandment of neighborly love a third commandment — that of *self-love;* for the command is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself.*" Must not my love for my neighbour, then, rest on the foundation of self-love? Is not self-love presupposed here as something without which neighbourly love would hang in the air? Thus, while the commandment of love speaks expressly of *two* things, love for God and love for one's neighbour, there has arisen a strong tradition, which has found acceptance both in Catholic and Protestant theology, that *three* things are included in the Christian commandment of love: love for God, for oneself, and for one's neighbour.

It should not need to be said that the commandment of self-love is alien to the New Testament commandment of love, and has grown up out of a wholly different soil from that of the New Testament. If there were not a desire on other grounds to include self-love among the ethical demands of Christianity, no one would be able to find in the commandment of love any reason for doing so. Self-love is man's natural condition, and also the reason for the perversity of his will. Everyone knows how by nature he loves himself. *So,* says the commandment of love, thou shalt love thy neighbour. When love receives this new direction, when it is turned away from one's self and directed to one's neighbour, then the natural perver-

> sion of the will is overcome. So far is neighbourly love from including self-love that it actually excludes and overcomes it.

Nygren here declares that self-love is SIN. Note that he writes: "Self-love is man's natural [pre-conversion, sinful] condition, and also the reason for the perversity of his will."

How then does Nygren explain the commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself?* He calls attention to the *spontaneity* and the *natural vigor* of that self-love. It is that spontaneity and vigor that is needed in loving the neighbor. It is the degree and vehemence with which we love ourselves that we should apply to loving the neighbor. Nygren does not consider the *content* of self-love to be made permissible by the phrase *as thyself,* but only the *quantitative* feature. His idea, then, really is, love thy neighbor with the intensity with which you sinfully love yourself. Give as much momentum to the virtue of loving your neighbor as you give momentum spontaneously to sinning by loving yourself. The *as thyself* does not justify self-love at all. Self-love manifests a fallen state and a perversity of the will. Consequently, Nygren wrote:

> *So,* says the commandment of love, shalt thou love thy neighbor.

The italics for the word *so* are Nygren's. He intends the word to refer to momentum not content. By such a definition, Nygren concludes that all *self-love* is sinful and perverse.

His proposition can be stated extremely simply, to wit: Selfishness is sin. (We have merely substituted "selfishness" for the words, *self-love,* used by Nygren.)

We do not agree with the foregoing explanation of the Commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself.* We believe that Scripture requires that there be three loves: (1) Love of God; (2) Love of self; (3) Love of neighbor.

Writers who argue against *selfishness* should make their position clear: do they agree with Nygren that there are only two loves required by Scripture — love of God and love of neighbor, and that self-love is forbidden by Scripture as a characteristic of post-Fall man, that is, sinful man. If perchance God has any self-love, He, too, according to this idea, would be sinful. We find it difficult to believe that God would have no self-love.

II

In the light of the definition of Nygren regarding, Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself,* it becomes easy to understand men as Van Tuinen and Lester De Koster when they write about *selfishness,* as follows (our italics):

> *Van Tuinen*: We take for granted that the church will preach the gospel demands . . . [which] condemn such un-Christian economic practices as . . . *selfishness,* . . . (p. 40 in *God-Centered Living or Calvinism in Action.*)

> *De Koster*: The great difference, then, between capitalist society and Communist society is that the former recognizes social evil, and not that only, but human evil as well. It takes risks in order to allow the greatest possible freedom, while reckoning with the inevitable influence of greed, *selfishness,* and in short, sin (p. 47 in *All Ye That Labor*).

Obviously, the statement of Van Tuinen, which in the whole context can be known to be the essence of his social and economic doctrine, takes on an obvious meaning if he follows Nygren that there are only two loves permitted in Scripture, but that a third love, *self-love* or selfishness, is forbidden and is sinful.

De Koster, according to the general tone of his book, *All Ye That Labor,* apparently holds to the same idea. In the quotation just presented he equates *selfishness* with sin. If selfishness is sin, and if self-love is the same as selfishness, then there can be no dispute that self-love is sin. That is what Nygren teaches.

Where does the trouble lie in all this? The trouble is largely in the definition of terms. *Selfishness* can represent *sin* in one case and not in another. Probably nobody exists who will declare that "selfishness" is always sin; and probably nobody exists who will declare that "selfishness" is never sin. *It depends on what is meant by selfishness.* In this situation we are reminded of Descartes's famous rules of method for thorough intellectual workmanship. The rules of Descartes are systematically being violated, unfortunately, in the Christian churches.

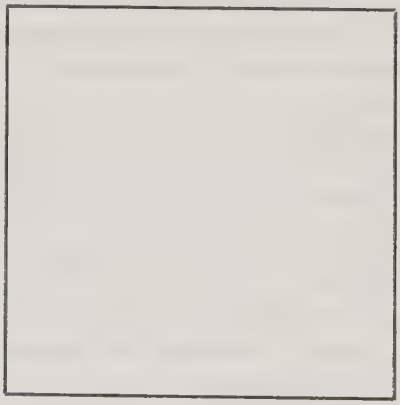
III

This is the basic question: Is the love of self sinful? Nygren answers *yes*. We answer *no*. To obtain his answer Nygren works from the New Testament *only;* he writes that "the commandment of self-love is alien to the New Testament commandment of love, and has grown up out of a wholly different soil from that of the New Testament." To obtain our answer we work off the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Undoubtedly, it is the Old Testament to which Nygren refers when he mentions "wholly different soil."

Is it worthy of attention to discover what *is* the difference on the questions of *self-love* and *selfishness?*

Let us revert to a symbolism we have used earlier (in the March 1955 issue of Progressive Calvinism) in order to "place ourselves correctly" or orient ourselves to life. What is the purpose of life? Why do we live? What should we do? How should we live?

To give an answer to such questions we have in the past indicated all of life by a square.



What shall we place in it?

There are several possible answers:

1. Live for *God* only
2. Live for *self* only

3. Live for *neighbor* only
4. Live for *God* and *self* only
5. Live for *God* and *neighbor* only
6. Live for *God, self* and *neighbor* — all three.

There will be readers who will look at the list and say, "Number one is the answer; we must live for God *only*."

If loftiness is to be the basis of selecting one of the foregoing, then those who select number five give the answer to life that we must live for both God *and* the neighbor. That would appear to be more than living for God only, and being more therefore it must be better. Number five is the answer of Nygren.

If the matter be left to us, we would insert in the square answer (6), namely, live for God, self and neighbor, *all three.* But when *three* are inserted in the square, there is the question, how much of the square does each get — how much does God get, how much does self get, and how much does the neighbor get?

Let us first settle between the self and the neighbor. How much does the self keep and how much does the neighbor get?

Our answer is candid. The neighbor should get very little indeed.* Purely as symbolism we grant him 1/16 of our "square of life." We show 1/16 in the lower left hand corner. We keep 15/16 of this for ourselves. (But see last paragraph in this section (section III) page 187.)

*But see last paragraph in this section, page 187.

Some will smile amusedly and say: The commandment is: Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself;* if so, why not give the neighbor ½ of the square. Then you have devoted half your life to yourself, and the other half to the neighbor. We do not look at life in that quantitative sense. We do not believe that Scripture teaches it; nor common sense; nor sound reason.

Why do we draw the space reserved for the neighbor so small on our square?

Life should not consist in exploiting the neighbor by violating the Second Table of the Law. It is perversion to pursue subjective values at the expense of the neighbor. But *looked at rightly* life has unlimited opportunities for pursuing subjective values without exploiting the neighbor. People should look at life as a magnificent free opportunity in other directions than by exploitation. Consequently, the forbidden phase of the square — the share reserved to the neighbor — is really picayune. We have drawn the small square accordingly.

Has the neighbor been short-changed by the way we have drawn our square? No, because he will in turn draw his own square similarly. He will cut out a small part of his square — the part which would consist of helping himself by harming us.

But, says an idealist, suppose everybody would put everything into it that they could "to live for each other." Everybody would "forget himself" and live only for all others. The answer to this is that it is hopelessly utopian. Nobody will *do* it, although a few will *talk* it. This ideal meets other equally insurmountable obstructions. The attempt to live for each other will cause chaotic confusion. Everybody will be making decisions for everybody else. No insane asylum could unloose a confusion equal to the proposal to "live for others only." And the psychological effect would be ruinous; no one would develop self-confidence, nor self-responsibility. Everybody would develop overwhelming inferiority complexes. The psychological result of my whole life being regulated and attended to by others would be that I would hate them; they would be robbing me of my opportunity to be myself, and independent, and fearless. Of one thing everyone may be certain: charity to those who *need* charity enhances love; but charity to those who

should not get charity embitters them; they finally hate their benefactors. Nygren's definition of neighborly love will cause men eventually to hate each other.

There is *one* part of our definition of "loving the neighbor" which can take a large part of the "square" of life, namely, promoting the gospel. It might even take all the square, except that a person work enough for himself to keep alive. In *that* sense the small square for the neighbor must be progressively enlarged and might even occupy a major part of the square. The social gospel does not teach that we should work for the neighbor only by preaching the gospel to him, but also by the other activities of life. (Van Tuinen, by the way, definitely limits his statement to the "economic.") In regard to the obligation to the neighbor to preach the gospel to him Scripture sounds two notes which have considerable polarity: (1) go out into the highways and byways and drag them in (one polarity); and (2) tell them the gospel and if they do not heed it, wipe the dust (of responsibility for them) off your feet (the other polarity). With so much polarity permissible we shall not undertake to designate the size of this activity.

IV

But, the devout will say, the whole scheme leaves God out of the situation. It must therefore be all wrong.

That could be corrected by taking (1) self and (2) neighbor out of the square entirely and putting in God only. Life then consists only in serving God.

What can that mean? Nobody has seen God, or, according to Scripture, ever will. As far as *seeing* is concerned there will NEVER be proof that God exists, in this dispensation or some future dispensation. The Hebrew-Christian religion is the most conservative in the world because it never expects to have *physical* evidence of God, except the human nature of the Second Person of the Trinity. Article I of the *Belgic Confession* says that God is "incomprehensible [and] invisible."

How serve the invisible and incomprehensible God? How get that "down to earth"?

There appears to be only two ways* that God can be served. By:

1. Recognition or acknowledgment, or as the Christian religion usually expresses it, by worship or *praise;* and by

2. *Obedience* to the Commandments of God. Those commandments are summarized in the Decalogue and its interpretation.

Beyond *praise* and *obedience* our mind has as much run out of content for honoring God as water evaporates out of a stream in a burning desert. Others may have a better imagination than ours; but ours runs dry beyond those two ideas.

In regard to the *praise* idea, it has for us its limitations. There are hymns which describe endless and repetitious praise throughout the ages of eternity. But that, in the hereafter, might be similar to how we presently enjoy a magnificent oratorio by a Mendelssohn or a requiem of a Brahms. Stupendous! But after we have heard the *Elijah* five times in two weeks we leave it alone for a long time. One gets tired of everything. It has similarly always seemed to us that *praise* is secondary in the "living to the glory of God."

What really counts, we believe, is *obedience.* The invisible and incomprehensible God is really honored by *obedience.* The rest is "talk."

Consider a child who pretends to respect you, cozzens you with endearing terms, but disobeys you! Does the "talk" mean much? Are you honored by such an inconsistent and disobedient child?

The question is: how is God honored by obedience?

The First Table of the Law demands acknowledgment, praise, trust and affection toward God. Looked at objectively no reasonable man can take offense at the demands of God in the First Table of the Law; they are amazingly moderate demands.

In contrast, it is by a special interpretation of the Second Table of the Law, that over-pious churchmen enlist *all* of a man's life as being required in the service of God. The reasoning is that

*In addition to *praise* and *obedience* which are in the field of action, there is also the purely subjective attitude of a man. We assume *attitude* will be reflected in *action.* See James 2:18.

by serving the neighbor we glorify God. Therefore, the more we serve the neighbor, that is, substitute his subjective values for our subjective values, the more we glorify God. Therefore, further, every man should concentrate every effort to live solely for the neighbor — wholly unselfishly, that is, as the neighbor wishes him to live — and thereby "glorify God."

But Scripture defines loving the neighbor as consisting only in: (1) not harming him; (2) being forbearing and forgiving; (3) showing charity; and (4) proclaiming the gospel. No more. God is, we believe, greatly *honored* by our exercising these great virtues. They cover the whole catalogue of virtues required in the Second Table of the Law according to the interpretation of both the Old and the New Testaments.

It is by such conduct — by *actions* — by OBEDIENCE — that God is glorified. In short, the most tangible way to glorify God is to love the neighbor as Scripture specifies, but not as Nygren specifies, which means abandoning your own subjective values and substituting the subjective values of all other people.

In an earlier issue (PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, September, 1956, pages 278-286) we have presented evidence that *obedience* was the basic principle by which the original Calvinists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries endeavored to "glorify God." It was their opinion that by obedience to the Biblical definition of neighborly love more tangible evidence was given of "glorifying God" than by a chorus of hallelujahs.

V

When Nygren attacks selfishness he is not attacking the same thing that we attack. He is not attacking violence, adultery, theft, falsehood and covetousness. He is attacking personal, subjective values — the pursuit of your own values, the acceptance of your own responsibility, the living of *your own* life.

That is not the old Biblical idea. Because Nygren's is a *new* idea, a new word must come into prominent circulation, the word *selfishness* — a new and great sin, evidenced by all who lack *agape* as Nygren has defined it.

Clearly, for *that* sin, a term is needed which is pervasive, immeasurable, great enough to cover all failure to live the lives of all neighbors for them. That idea is admirably expressed by the word *selfishness.* But the idea involved is unscriptural.

VI

Many modernist theologians and some conservative theologians hold, more or less clearly, to Nygren's condemnation of the pursuit of personal, subjective values.

That attitude is a "loftier" one than we can accept. Nygren flies high in his idealism. We are pedestrian and earthy.

Although many modern Calvinists may be with Nygren and against us in this matter, we do have a "cloud of witnesses" with us, or more accurately said, we are with them.

In the main, Calvinists in the hey-day of Calvinism were of the same mind as we have outlined — the Puritans, the Presbyterians, the Reformed in the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries — 400 years. But since the latter part of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century there are fewer with us and more with Nygren. Religion has become more idealistic, and maybe sanctimonious.

In addition to the Calvinists of the past, the prevailing ideas among the Fundamentalists of the present day are, we believe, the same as we have outlined. The Fundamentalists are strict Biblicists, as we are, too. They are with us, and we are with them.

It would be a mistake to fail to mention that Communists are closer to Nygren's idea than to ours. Communists are genuinely against the pursuit of personal, subjective values. They will agree with Nygren that the pursuit of personal, subjective values is sin. They will concur with Nygren that every man should live only for his neighbor. We do not expect our ideas to be accepted in countries behind the Iron Curtain. We have too lowly a religion. Their religion of brotherly love is "higher." But nothing can be more useful to them than this idea that the pursuit of personal, subjective values is SIN.

VII

When we read essays as Van Tuinen's "The Task of the Church for the Solution of Modern Problems" in *God-Centered Living or Calvinism in Action,* published by the Calvinistic Action Committee, or a book as Lester De Koster's *All Ye That Labor,* we regretfully realize that basically our "principles" are different. If they and we both go by the name *Calvinist,* there will be confusion. The different and conflicting ideas should not go by the same name.

One basic tactic should, however, be strenuously opposed. That tactic consists of intellectuals in the Nygrenian tradition beginning with an attack on *selfishness* meaning violence, adultery, theft, falsehood and covetousness — sins which are sins. But then they shift; having qualified or accredited their attack on *selfishness* by referring to those positive evils, they then subtly carry over their attack to that other definition of selfishness which is merely the legitimate pursuit of personal, subjective values.

By that intellectual gymnastic, legitimate self-love is condemned under the disguise of an attack on violence, adultery, theft, falsehood and covetousness. It is "no fair." We shout "foul ball." fn

Summary Of This Issue

We have wandered through several definitions of *selfishness;* it will be valuable to enumerate them, and to relate Individualism with these several definitions.

Definitions Of Selfishness	Related To Individualism
1. A principle, contrary to efficiency, by which businesses should be managed (see p. 172-4).	1. No.
2. Bad manners—unthoughtfulness; letting others (who are foolish to do so) do work you should do (see p. 174).	2. No.

3. Sins against Second Table of Law. This is the old fashioned definition. (See page 174-5).	3. Yes. Individualism is against these, but see 4 and 5.
4. Pursuit of legitimate self-regarding interests; legitimate self-love. (See pages 175-7).	4. Yes, essential to Individualism.
5. Pursuit of *subjective* values by others as well as self, that is each's *own judgment* rather than another's, that is, *maximum liberty* (pp. 178-179).	5. Yes, this is more accurately Individualism than number 4, because Individualism is not restricted to self-love, Individualism being more closely related to liberty.

Individualism is number 5, controlled by the restrictions in number 3; subjective values (number 5) may be pursued, provided the demands of the Law (number 3) are observed.

If numbers 4 and 5, controlled by number 3, constitute selfishness. then Individualism involves selfishness.

We hold, however, that *liberty controlled by the Law of God* is not sinful selfishness.

* * *

In the next issue we shall continue our discussion of Messianic Interventionism.

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